

# Islay & Mull....In Style

Naturetrek Tour Report

1 - 7 November 2012



Barnacle Geese



Otter



Otter, Loch na Keal, Mull



Mull

Report and images compiled by Peter Clement



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## Day 1

**Thursday 1st November**

The tour group gathered at Glasgow Central Station and at 1.30pm Peter and Martin arrived in the mini-buses and we loaded up for the drive to Kennacraig, stopping only to pick-up James, Kenneth and Margaret at Glasgow Airport shortly after 2pm, and Paul from a hotel on the shore of Loch Lomond a little while later. On the way we passed the calm but cool-looking Loch Fyne where the first Hooded Crows appeared and stopped for a short comfort-break by the old quay at Inverary. Pressing on again there was little of note and we arrived at Kennacraig shortly before 5 pm as it was getting dark.

The ferry left on time at 6pm and the crossing to Islay was fairly smooth and uneventful despite earlier fears that the strong winds day may have meant otherwise. Once ashore at Port Askaig we drove across to Bowmore where a warm welcome awaited us at the Harbour Inn, our home for the next three nights. We quickly settled in to our rooms and then found a late but welcome hot supper waiting for us in the dining room. After dinner Peter set up a map of Islay in the lounge and explained the plan of action for the next couple of days.

## Day 2

**Friday 2nd November**

The morning dawned fine and clear, with a little brisk breeze. After breakfast in the dining room which looks out over the harbour we set off in search of geese. We didn't have to go far to find the first ones, just outside Bowmore a flock of Pale-bellied Brent Geese were feeding and swimming along the edge of the rocks right by the shore and allowed good views in the morning sun.

Slightly further on we came across a family group of four Whooper Swans resting and preening at the end of a short promontory into the loch. The nearby Bridgend Flats seemed almost empty of geese at first but it soon became clear that as the tide was out most of the geese were further out on the open mudflats. Having moved a little further on we stopped again to look out over another part of Loch Indaal where in the rather choppy water we found a large flock of Scaup, a winter plumage Red-throated Diver, several Great Northern Divers, one or two Eiders and some distant Shags on the rocks, closer inshore there were several groups of Red-breasted Mergansers. In the inland fields nearby a large flock of Barnacle Geese were gathering with small flocks dropping in to join them as we watched allowing us our first good views.

Pressing on we drove north along the narrow road to the RSPB reserve at Loch Gruinart passing a small flock of Greenland White-fronts in a field close to the road along the way. In the fields around the reserve headquarters we came across several flocks of Barnacle Geese and amongst them smaller numbers of Greenland White-fronts and some Greylag Geese. In the more distant fields we could see even larger flocks of geese and there were a lot of smaller flocks flying to and fro between the fields and the nearby Loch Gruinart itself. Although able to see the geese well from the mini-buses we drove on up to the RSPB visitor centre perched on a low hill overlooking all the fields for a better view.

After a while, having spent some time looking at several of the closer flocks of Barnacle Geese our attention was suddenly drawn to the birds in the sycamore trees in front of us when two Waxwings flew in calling and perched in the tops of the trees before moving on when a Sparrowhawk came dashing by. Pleased with our success we boarded the buses again and set off along the road to Ardnave which looks down onto the wide expanse of Loch Gruinart from the slightly higher ground to the west. We stopped several times to admire and photograph several large flocks of Barnacle Geese and smaller numbers of Greenland White-fronts gathered in the fields between the road and the loch. At one point we made a hurried stop when a female Hen Harrier flew up only a matter of yards away over a roadside field and began flying to and fro over the weedy field doubtless in search of small birds sheltering in the tall plants.

Further on along the road we stopped and walked across a field to the ruined and long abandoned chapel and cemetery which sits atop a small rise at the edge of the loch. From the wall at the edge of the cemetery we had a grandstand view out over the loch with various flocks of geese, mainly Barnacles, dotted about on the mudflats as far as we could see. Closer to us were a couple of large black birds foraging in the grassy slope below the chapel which, on closer inspection, turned into Choughs and through the telescope showed their brick red bill and legs as well as their glossy black plumage. At the end of the track we stopped to look at birds on Ardnave Loch which apart from a couple of Goldeneye and a large flock of Teal seemed strangely deserted.

We had arranged for lunch to be the cafe at Port Charlotte and on the way stopped at the jetty at Bruichladdich in the hope of seeing some Black Guillemots which breed there and are usually close-by during the winter. Sadly the Guillemots were nowhere to be seen but we did manage to find three Long-tailed Ducks and a couple of fine Great Northern Divers in summer plumage. After lunch we drove along the narrow road to Portnahaven at the far western tip of the island. Here we gazed out at the lighthouse which stands on one of the two offshore islands which protect the small villages of Portnahaven and Port Wemyss from the wilder ravages of the Atlantic swells which, from what we could see through the gap between the two islands, was fairly lively today with large breakers and white-crested rollers extending out to the horizon.

On the landward side of the two islands small groups of both Common and Grey Seals (the latter outnumbering the former) dozed on rocks or on pebble and boulder-filled beaches or played in the shallows of the rapidly driven current swirling through the channel. In the large inlet between the two villages where small one-storey fishermen's houses line both sides several Grey Seals played and splashed in the calm water seemingly oblivious to our presence.

Before heading back to Bowmore we took a short circular drive around the headland which looks down on the heaving seas and back towards the two islands and the lighthouse. We were just passing the most westerly house on the island (which overlooks a small bay) when Peter picked out an immature Glaucous Gull perched on a rock stack at the edge of the bay. There was just time for the group to get a view through the telescope before the gull flew down and landed on the sea briefly before deciding to move off out of view altogether. The light was now fading and the grey clouds were gathering over the horizon behind the lighthouse as we headed back to the hotel well pleased with the birds, animals and land and seascapes we had seen.

## Day 3

## Saturday 3rd November

The weather forecast proved to be reliable with a calm sunny day forecast with only little chance of scattered showers so after a fine traditional breakfast we boarded the buses and set off to Port Askaig and the ferry to Jura. The crossing to Jura takes only a matter of minutes but once across the road runs along the edge of the Sound just yards above the beach in places where previous trips have seen Otters. We spent some time driving along slowly and scanning the shoreline and although there were plenty of otter-shaped rocks we failed to find the real thing. Moving on we continued along the road which rises up from the edge of the Sound to cross high over moorland and bracken-covered slopes of the higher ground and peaks above.

We hadn't gone far along this road when the first herds of Red Deer were seen close to the road, stopping to admire and photo the fine antlers on the heads of the males we found a male Hen Harrier slowly flying along over the moorland slightly further away. The rest of the drive to Craighouse and Small Isles Bay was fairly uneventful with the exception of several more groups of Red Deer. The village of Craighouse extends along the edge of and overlooks Small Isles Bay which, on its far side, is marked by a line of small rocky islands (hence the name) which usually means that the bay is sheltered from the rougher area of sea beyond.

We drove on along the edge of the bay and on across the east side of the island over some rolling hills and bracken-covered slopes which lead up to the Paps of Jura. Stopping from time to time to look over the bay there was no sign of any Otter activity but we did find two or three Great Northern Divers out in the bay and closer to some Siskins feeding in roadside Alders and several Fieldfares and Redwings feeding on the rowan and hawthorn berries. We continued on to the end of the driveable road but with little new to show for our efforts and the weather which had started fine with clear blue skies was slowly turning very grey with the promise of squally showers now becoming more threatening and imminent to judge by the glowering clouds over the peaks. We returned to Craighouse for lunch and waited for the worst of the weather to pass over before venturing out again.

After lunch we set off to check out the area by the only other road on Jura which leads to the settlements at Knockrome and Ardfernal before turning into a bumpy track down to Lowlandman's Bay.

We passed along the edge of Small Isles Bay and noted the now familiar Buzzards, Red-breasted Mergansers, a flock of Grey Lag Geese and a couple of Stonechats. We drove on to Lowlandman's Bay and en route a ringtail Hen Harrier flew up from close to the road and went off over the grass-covered moorland. We parked by one of the cottages that must have one of the best views on the island looking out over the wild and often white-capped Sound of Jura to the rocky, indented and seemingly uninhabited coast of mainland Argyll with very little sign of any human habitation anywhere. The bay itself appeared rather birdless at first though the shoreline was dotted with various groups of dozing Grey Seals. We walked a little way down towards the shoreline and scanned the bay and a distant Otter was picked out on the far side of the bay but quickly disappeared amongst the choppy water before anyone could get onto it. Also out in the bay was a Great Northern Diver which showed well through the scopes and an elusive Red-throated Diver which didn't.

Turning around we set off back to Craighouse and beyond for another attempt to find a visible Otter along the edge of the Sound. We drove up and down along the edge of the Sound until the magic head and tail of a swimming Otter came into view. Over the ensuing minutes everyone got excellent views of the Otter swimming out in the deep water and occasionally stopping to feed on something fetched up from the deep and on a couple of occasions came in close to the edge and we hoped was about to come out onto the shore when we noticed the car ferry some way across the Sound further down which meant a slightly hurried departure down the road to catch it as the next one was several hours later.

Once back on Islay we hurried down to Gruinart Flats to see if there was any large-scale roosting movement of geese but probably due to the weather, by now strong winds and light drizzle (dreech in Scottish), most of the geese seemed fairly settled in the fields and there was little sign of any birds moving. On looking closely through the flocks of Barnacle Geese we did however manage to find one of the smaller races of Canada Geese that are now a regular feature of the winter goose flocks here, this was a Richardson's Canada Goose of the race *hutchinsii* which, with a little difficulty (due to having to park along the side of the narrow road) and the wind, most of the group managed to see through the telescopes.

## Day 4

## Sunday 4th November

An early start to catch the ferry from Port Ellen meant a departure from the hotel as it was getting light was delayed only slightly by a Black Guillemot in winter plumage in the harbour at Bowmore. The crossing to Kennacraig was rather breezy and the sea rather choppy but interspersed with several more Black Guillemots as we left Port Ellen and about 12 Great Northern and one-two Red-throated Divers as we reached Loch Tarbert. From Kennacraig we drove north to Oban via Lochgilphead and Kilmartin where we stopped for lunch. We arrived in Oban in good time to catch the evening ferry to Cragganure on Mull where we arrived as the sun was setting and it was fully dark by the time we had driven along the narrow roadway west across to the end of Loch Scridain and then on to Tiroran House Hotel set in large gardens above the loch. A warm welcome awaited us as we were shown into our sumptuously comfortable rooms before an equally sumptuous and delicious evening meal was served in the dining room.

## Day 5

## Monday 5th November

The day dawned bright, clear and sunny with little wind and from the large windows of the dining room we had our first views of the extensive gardens of the hotel.

Eager to be off we boarded the mini-buses and drove off down the drive and out through the gates to the first of many heart-stopping moments of tranquil beauty. Loch Scridain was almost mirror-still and reflected back perfectly the many shades of green and brown on the surrounding hillsides together with the occasional larch and birch woods shedding the last of their summer leaves. Along the edge of the loch we found a large flock of Eiders, two Great Northern Divers and a Black-throated Diver and at one point in amongst some seaweed-strewn rocks we came across a large female Otter with a well-grown young serenely feeding on crabs less than 50 yards from us. At the top of the loch we found several Greenshank, the last of the migrants to leave their summer haunts.

We made a brief detour along the southern edge of the loch in search of two Sea Eagles which we had been told were seen here just moments before but all we found were numerous Buzzards. However, the sight of snow-dusted mountain tops reflected back from the near crystal-still surface of the loch was more than sufficiently rewarding for our efforts another true 'Wow' moment.

Back on our scheduled route we moved east along the road through a deep, but near-perfect, U-shaped glaciated valley towards Loch Spelve and the road to Grasspoint. As we drove down the narrow lane to Grasspoint another Greenshank probed in the edges of a shallow stream. At the point itself birds were rather few and far between with only a few Eiders offshore but the landscape itself backed by distant snowy peaks on the mainland lit by the morning sun was more than worth coming for. As we walked back up the lane to the car park first one then another large bird was picked out soaring up above the ridge some way inland. Our first Sea Eagles, although slightly distant the size and shape of the huge almost square-tipped wings and short tail gave them away, we waited as they soared gracefully with only the occasional wingbeat as they moved along and then back over the ridge before dipping down out of sight.

Driving on again we passed through Craignure and on along the road that runs up the northeast side of the island to Salen and then we took the smaller road west through some open moorland dotted with occasional larchwoods until we came out onto the top end of Loch na Keal. Several Curlews busied themselves probing in the muddy edges as we drove along before stopping on a small grassy headland in the northern corner of the loch. This is a well-known location for eagles, both Sea and Golden, and we were not to be disappointed. Other eagle-watchers had also arrived at this spot and were happy to point out an adult Sea Eagle sitting in the top of a tall pine tree about 150 yards upslope behind us. Through the scopes we could see almost every detail of this truly impressive bird with its fierce frowning look and massive yellow hook-tipped bill. The eagle appeared oblivious to our presence and sat serenely gazing out over us and the loch all the while we were there.

Turning our attention away from the perched eagle for the moment there were birds out on the loch including a fine Great Northern Diver in summer plumage and several Slavonian Grebes in their winter finery. In one corner of the loch a couple of Bar-tailed Godwits fed alongside the Curlews and as we watched an Otter swam into view amongst the seaweed covered rocks nearby. Slowly and gradually the Otter came closer all the while swimming along the edge of the shore until it disappeared behind a large rock-slab, fearing that to be our final sighting we were about to turn back to the eagle in the tree when the Otter came bounding into view along the top of the rock and almost straight towards us no more than a hundred yards away, veering off only at the last minute to dive into the water and head out in front of us into the loch.

Wherever we looked there was something to see with a Sea Eagle in one direction, an Otter in another and Divers and Grebes in another, what more could we ask. Glancing along the tops of the mountains on the far side of the loch we found another large bird circling over the peaks. This was our second eagle, a Golden Eagle and shortly after a second bird appeared close by the first and from the rising and steeply falling flight of the first bird it appeared to be in partial display flight in the calm air. In a bid to get closer to the Golden Eagle we bade farewell to the Sea Eagle and hurried off to the south side of the loch. Once there we tried first one then another location without success, had they moved on or given up? Moving along the edge of the loch gave us a wider perspective of the peaks and on the third stop we relocated the pair now in soaring and circling flight over the high tops. By means of lining up behind the telescopes and by rapid change-over it was possible for the whole group to get splendid views of these impressive raptors in flight.

By late afternoon the light was beginning to fade and an orange glow was spreading in from the sunset in the west. We set off again in the mini-buses westwards along the southern edge of the loch and rounded the rocky headland that overlooks the small offshore island of Inch Kenneth before the road climbs steeply up and over a narrow pass. Here we stopped to admire and try to capture in photographs the sunset and sea-scape of islands looking both west and northwest out to Tiree in the far background. As we were about to set off again a Buzzard flew low over the peaks and across the pass heading towards the furthest headland followed shortly by a Golden Eagle. Rapidly as we could we scrambled out of the mini-buses to watch as the eagle passed by only for it to be followed moments later by a second and, much to our utter amazement, a third and then a fourth including at least two immature birds (told by patches of white in the wings and tail), all heading slowly in the same direction and presumably to a favoured roost site. In all we guessed that we had seen a minimum of at least 7 individuals which may have included our original displaying pair! What a way to end a fabulous day not only for fantastic wildlife but also for some truly stunning scenery in the best of autumn lights...

## Day 6

## Tuesday 6th November

Rarely is the weather the same two days running on the west coast of Scotland and so it proved today dawning cloudy with intermittent squally showers. Nothing daunted we set off suitably armed against the weather in the mini-buses to the northern end of Mull. We hadn't gone far from Tioran when the first stop by a bridge over a small river that emptied in to Loch Scridain was made for a Dipper foraging in the shallows seemingly unaware of the driving drizzle as it walked in and out of the stream in search of something for breakfast.

We drove on along the side of Loch na Keal almost unrecognisable from the serene sunlit picture of yesterday and gone were any hopes or sights of eagles as we scanned the high tops of mountains and tall trees for likely silhouettes. We drove on around the loch now filled with rather choppy water in the strengthening breeze finding the occasional Buzzard on a roadside telegraph post and a small flock of Greylag Geese in a roadside field. Continuing on past Ballygowan the scenery became more rugged and less inviting though doubtless on a calm sunny day it would have been tempting to linger along the road. Crossing over a stretch of moorland between Achleck and Dervaig we came upon a ringtail Hen Harrier that soon vanished into the mist of low-cloud that was now descending.

Arriving in Tobermory around lunchtime we set off for an exploration of lunchtime venues and eventually settled on a hotel at the end of the Strand which offered the best menu including a warming soup and a sandwich.



Lunch over the weather appeared to be improving with the drizzle now much reduced but the cloud-base still seemed ominously low. Walking back to the mini-buses in the car park we were amazed to see a large Otter feeding right by a stream coming out from under the street and into harbour. We had been told by others that the harbour was a good place to see Otters on Mull but it was difficult to believe that here was one right in front of us and seemingly unconcerned by our presence. The Otter swam, dived and climbed out onto the seaweed-covered rocks just yards in front of us either carrying or eating small bootlace-sized eels. At one stage the group was lined up along the harbour wall and the Otter came out of the water below us and appeared to run up in to the bottom of the hedge before changing direction and running back down into the water. With cameras going into overdrive we managed to get some fabulous photos of this near-mythically hard to see animal behaving in such a fearless manner; it was really hard to tear ourselves away from the spot but in the end it appeared that the Otter had had sufficient and slipped away under some rocks at the end of the sea wall leaving us with some stunning memories and photos. It would have been difficult to follow that and so it proved with the return of the rain, all we could do was to peer out from the min-buses at the rain-lashed scenery and give thanks for the day before. We arrived back at Tioran as the light was fading but in good time for a little relaxation by the blazing fire in the lounge and an aperitif or two before dinner.

## Day 7

## Wednesday 7th November

Dawn arrived with dull mist and drizzle and although one or two brave souls managed a quick trip around the gardens (where Red Squirrels are usually to be found) there was little of note to be seen. After breakfast we said our farewell to Tioran House and set off back along the road to Craignure. The Dipper put in a brief appearance in the same place as yesterday morning and the small flock of Greylag Geese and some Widgeon were still present on Loch Spelve together with a small flock of Fieldfares and Redwings in the nearby fields. The crossing to Oban was rather uneventful with few of the group venturing outside into the continuing drizzle but a few Black Guillemots were around the ferry as we came into Oban harbour.

We stopped for lunch in Inveraray and were back at Loch Lomond to drop Paul off and at Glasgow Airport in good time for the next farewells before everyone said their goodbyes at Glasgow Central just after 3.30. Although the weather had dampened the atmosphere of the last day everyone was agreed that the trip had been hugely successful with all the aims of the holiday including the geese on Islay, deer on Jura and eagles and otters on Mull achieved in full which together with the combination of superb light and breath-taking scenery on all three islands will mean that it will all remain long in the memory.

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## Species List

### Birds

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Islay/Jura: At least 100 in fields between Sunderland Farm and Loch Gorm on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov with smaller numbers in fields around Loch Gruinart and a flock of about 80 in fields near Small Isles Bay, Jura on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Mull: About 100 at Loch Spelve on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Greenland White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons flavirostris*

Islay: Up to 250 mostly around Loch Gruinart on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov.

Canada Goose *Branta hutchinsii hutchinsii*

Islay: Single of the race *hutchinsii* (known as Richardson's Canada Goose) with Barnacle Geese on Gruinart Flats on the evening of 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov.

Pale-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla brota*

Islay: A flock of 25 along the shoreline of Loch Indaal at Bowmore on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

Islay: Flocks totalling over 30,000 on various parts of the island between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Islay/Jura: Small numbers on Loch Gruinart and Loch Indaal, Islay and up to 6 Small Isles Bay, Jura.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Islay: 4 on the edge of the saltmarsh at Bowmore and a single in fields at Sunderland Farm on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov and about 7 in fields on Gruinart Flats on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Islay/Jura: 6 on a sandbar by Bridgend Flats 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov and 2 in Small Isles Bay, Jura on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Mull: at least 4 in Loch na Keal on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Islay: Up to 25 on Bridgend Flats and fields around Loch Gruinart 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov.

Mull: A flock of at least 30 on Loch Spelve on 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Nov and 12 on Loch na Keal on 5<sup>th</sup>.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Islay/Jura: Up to 30 on flooded area around Loch Gruinart on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov and about 20 on Small Isles Bay, Jura on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Mull: Small numbers on Loch Spelve and Loch na Keal on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>.

Common Teal *Anas crecca*

Islay: About 120 on Ardnave Loch and at least 100 on flooded area around Loch Gruinart on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Mull: A flock of about 25 on Loch Spelve on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Islay: A flock of 6 on Ardnave Loch on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Scaup *Aythya marila*

Islay: A large flock of over 120 on Loch Indaal on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Eider *Somateria mollissima*

Islay/Jura: Small numbers on Loch Indaal on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov and a flock of about 15 in Small Isles Bay, Jura on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Mull: Small numbers in Oban harbour on 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> and about 75 in Loch Scridain on 5<sup>th</sup>.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*

Islay: 3 in Loch Indaal offshore from Bruichladdich on morning of 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Common Goldeneye *Clangula hyemala*

Islay/Jura: 2 males on Loch Indaal on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov and at least another in Small Isles Bay, Jura on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Mull: Several family parties on Loch Scridain on 5<sup>th</sup>.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

Common in small numbers and seen daily on Islay, Jura and Mull.

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

Islay: Singles in winter plumage on Loch Indaal 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov and 1-2 between Islay and Kennacraig on 4<sup>th</sup>.

Mull: Single on Loch Scridain on 5<sup>th</sup>.

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

Mull: Single in winter plumage on Loch Scridain on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

Islay/Jura: Up to 4 on Loch Indaal on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3 Small Isles Bay, Jura on 3<sup>rd</sup> also about 12 between Islay and Kennacraig on 4<sup>th</sup>.

Mull: Up to 4 between Oban and Craignure on 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> also 2 in summer plumage on Loch Scridain and another on Loch na Keal on 5<sup>th</sup>.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Mull: 2 on Loch Scridain on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov and single on sea near Ulva ferry on 6<sup>th</sup>.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

Mull: 4 in winter plumage Loch na Keal on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Small numbers seen every day, slightly more numerous on Mull than on Islay.

Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Very common, seen every day.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Fairly common, small numbers seen most days.

White-tailed Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Mull: 2 seen distantly soaring up over hills along the Grasspoint-Loch Spelve road and later on an adult sitting in the top of a pine tree above the shore of Loch na Keal on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Islay/Jura: A ring-tail female/immature in flight near Ardnave on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov and 3 (including a male and 2 ring-tail female/immature on Jura on the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Mull: A ring-tail female/immature near Loch Scridain on 5<sup>th</sup> and another near Loch na Keal on 6<sup>th</sup>.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Islay: Single at the Loch Gruinart RSPB Visitor Centre on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Mull: Single in flight over Loch na Keal on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Common, seen every day.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Mull: A total of 7 individuals including a pair in display and soaring flight over the mountains on the south side of Loch na Keal on the afternoon of 5<sup>th</sup> Nov and one seen briefly in the same area the following day.

- Kestrel      *Falco tinnunculus*  
Pairs seen on Islay 2<sup>nd</sup>, Jura 3<sup>rd</sup> and Mull 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>.
- Common Pheasant      *Phasianus colchicus*  
Common and widespread, mainly introduced birds on all islands.
- Red-legged Partridge      *Alectoris rufa*  
Islay: A large covey of about 20 in fields near the RSPB reserve at Loch Gruinart on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.
- Oystercatcher      *Haematopus ostralegus*  
Common on all three islands.
- Lapwing      *Vanellus vanellus*  
Up to 100 in fields around Loch Gruinart on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov.
- Ringed Plover      *Charadrius hiaticula*  
Jura; At least 3 on beach in Small isles Bay, Jura on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov.  
Mull: About 15 along the shore of Loch Spelve on 5<sup>th</sup>.
- Bar-tailed Godwit      *Limosa lapponica*  
Islay: 3 along the shore at the top end of Loch Indaal on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.  
Mull: At least 2 along the edge of Loch na Keal on 5<sup>th</sup>.
- Curlew      *Numenius arquatus*  
Islay/Jura: Up to 50 on flooded fields at Loch Gruinart 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov, also 1-2 on Jura, mainly along shore of Small isles Bay.  
Mull: 1-2q on Lochs Scridain and na Keal on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>.
- Common Redshank      *Tringa totanus*  
Islay: 1-2 on Gruinart Flats on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov and 2-3 Small Isles Bay, Jura 3<sup>rd</sup>.  
Mull: 1-2 along the shore of Loch na Keal on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.
- Greenshank      *Tringa nebularia*  
Mull: At least 4 at the top end of Loch Scridain on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.
- Turnstone      *Arenaria interpres*  
Islay/Jura: Small numbers present on both islands.
- Dunlin      *Calidris alpina*  
Mull: 2 along the shore of Loch na Keal on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.
- Kittiwake      *Rissa tridactyla*  
Islay: At least 30 offshore from Portnahaven and Port Wemyss on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov and 20+ between Islay and Kennacraig on 4<sup>th</sup>.  
Mull: About 10 between Oban and Craignure on 4<sup>th</sup> and on return journey on 7<sup>th</sup>.
- Black-headed Gull      *Larus ridibundus*  
Small numbers seen daily.
- Common Gull      *Larus canus*  
Small numbers daily on all islands.
- Great Black-backed Gull      *Larus marinus*  
Up to 20 seen daily on all three islands.
- Glaucous Gull      *Larus hyperboreus*  
Islay: a first-year bird on rocks off Portnahaven briefly on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.
- Herring Gull      *Larus argentatus*  
Common on Islay and Mull and smaller numbers around Small Isles Bay, Jura.

Common Guillemot *Uria aalge*

At least 10 between Islay and Kennacraig on 4<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Black Guillemot *Cepphus grylle*

3-4 in winter plumage in Oban harbour on 4<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Small numbers on all three islands but more numerous on Islay.

Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Islay/Jura: Small numbers on both islands.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Islay/Jura: Pairs at Bridgend, Islay and at Craighouse, Jura.

Mull: Small numbers on all three days.

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Common, seen every day.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Common and widespread up to about 100 daily on Islay.

Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

Islay: 2 together feeding on the grassy turf below the ruined chapel at Kilnave on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Seen mainly up to Loch Lomond and around Arrochar on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*

Common and widespread, seen daily.

Raven *Corvus corax*

Common on both islands.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

Islay/Jura: Fairly common around RSPB Gruinart visitor centre on 2<sup>nd</sup> and in gardens at Craighouse, Jura on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Mull: At least one pair around the Tìroran Hotel on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>.

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Islay/Jura: Singles on Islay on 2<sup>nd</sup> and on Jura 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov.

Mull: Single near the Tìroran Hotel on 6<sup>th</sup>.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Mull: Single in roadside bushes near Loch na Keal on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov and 1-2 in trees near Loch Spelve on 6<sup>th</sup>.

Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*

Mull: Single on rocks in river mouth into Loch Scridain near Tìroran Hotel 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Waxwing *Bombus garrulus*

Islay: 2 in trees by the RSPB Visitor Centre at Loch Gruinart on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Widespread but small numbers seen or heard daily on all islands.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Seen daily (mostly around Loch Gruinart) on Islay and several flocks on both Jura and Mull.

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Common and widespread, seen daily on all islands.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Small numbers seen daily but flock of 30+ on Islay on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 20+ on Jura 3<sup>rd</sup> and same number on Mull on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Islay/Jura: Small numbers, up to about 10 together, seen daily.

Mull: Up to 10 seen around Loch Spelve on 6<sup>th</sup>.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Fairly common in small numbers, seen daily on all three islands.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Jura: 3 in bushes at top end of Small Isles Bay on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov.

Mull: Single in garden of Tiroran Hotel on 6<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*

Small numbers seen on all three islands.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Common and widespread on all islands.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Small numbers daily on all islands.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

Small numbers seen daily on all islands.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Islay/Jura: At least one pair at Loch Gruinart visitor centre on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov and single at Craighouse, Jura 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Islay: Single at the RSPB Visitor centre at Loch Gruinart Reserve on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*

Islay/Jura: Small numbers around Loch Indaal and Small Isles Bay, Jura.

Mull: Small numbers around the edge of Loch Scridain and Loch na Keal.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Islay/Jura: Small numbers present around Loch Gruinart and along Small Isles Bay, Jura.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Common, seen daily on all islands and about 50 together near Port Charlotte, Islay on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Islay: Small numbers up to 5 together at the RSPB visitor centre at Loch Gruinart on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*

Islay: A small flock of about 20 over rough grass patch at Port Wemyss on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Islay: Several in bushes around Loch Gorm on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

## Mammals.

Rabbit        *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Small numbers seen on Islay and Mull.

Brown Hare        *Lepus capensis*

At least three on Islay on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov.

Common Seal    *Phoca vitulina*

Small numbers on all three islands, most numerous at Portnahaven, Islay on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Grey Seal        *Halichoerus grypus*

Small numbers on all three islands, most numerous at Portnahaven, Islay on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Otter            *Lutra lutra*

Single distantly in Lowlandman's Bay, Jura on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov and another later that day swimming along the edge of the Sound of Islay. A large female together with a well-grown young on Loch Scridain on the morning of 5<sup>th</sup> Nov and another swimming and running over rocks on the shore of Loch na Keal later in the day; also prolonged views of one swimming and feeding on eels in Tobermory harbour on 6<sup>th</sup>.

Red Deer        *Cervus elaphus*

Common and widespread on Jura, smaller numbers, mainly in farm fields on Islay.

Roe Deer        *Capreolus capreolus*

Up to 4 near Loch Gruinart on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Harbour Porpoise        *Phocoena phocoena*

One, possibly more seen Loch na Keal 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Eurasian Red Squirrel    *Sciurus vulgaris*

One dashed quickly across the road near Tarbert on the morning of 4<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Common Pippistrelle    *Pippistrellus pippistrellus*

One, in flight in the grounds of Tìroran House on the evening of 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.